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REVIEW: A Tribute to Poppins, The Butterfly Club

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We are yet to see the best from Jonathon Cook, the prodigious young performer and creator of this Midsumma one man show. The recent VCA graduate displays rare qualities during this one hour show and is enormously funny. He will only improve as he gains the type of real gig experience performing arts institutions fail to offer their students.

Cook takes us on an autobiographical journey through his brief life as an outback Queenslander who was always aware he was 'different' to his school chums due to a quirky personality that led him to attend his grade prep dress up day dressed as Mary Poppins while all the other boys chose Superman or The incredible Hulk.

Rather than rugby, Cook was obsessed with musicals and tells his hilarious life story with the aid of some of his favorite tunes altering the lyrics to describe his experiences.

He displays excellent comic, musical and acting ability as well as a world view that belies his age and experience.

On opening night he was understandably nervous but quickly got the audience on side with some brilliant comic saves and the help of his stoic pianist.

Unfortunately, his nerves got the better of him midway through the show and he briefly lost control – though he did manage to recover with a couple of real show stoppers at the end.

He would do well to warm up thoroughly before he goes on stage and I'm not sure if it was due to his lack of vocal preparation, nerves or the warm dry air in the venue that he failed to reach top notes on occasion that he is clearly more than capable of achieving.

Despite these technicalities it is a totally entertaining show and amazing value for money. This is completely down to Cook's incredible raw talent, energy and razor wit.

His use of a projector to show pictures of a young Cook dressed as Mary Poppins and some favorite old musical dance numbers (which he dances along to perfectly) is a brilliant device which helps him illustrate his story.

There are a few moments of poignancy and darkness which demonstrate further his considerable power as a performer.

His references to his Catholic upbringing are hilarious, due to his fresh-faced disposition, but he'll have to watch that such references do not evolve into clichéd cynicism as he develops as a performer.

That's in the future, however, for now it's just fine.

Cook is destined for great things if he keeps a positive outlook and remembers to stay in control, even when he feels he's lost it.

My feeling is that people who go to see his first one man show will one day be saying, "I saw Jonathon Cook when...."



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